



# 95 EXPRESS



## News Clip

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From: *Miami Today*, Thursday, October 18, 2007  
Subject: **High Occupancy Toll lanes slated for next summer**

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### **High Occupancy Toll lanes slated for next summer**

*By Marilyn Bowden*

With federal and state money in hand, the county's first High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lane – a managed traffic lane that promised drivers willing to pay a higher toll a quicker ride – could be in operation by next summer.

In addition to the \$62.9 million awarded the project by the US Department of Transportation, the Florida Legislature has kicked in \$35 million toward the conversion of current High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes along I-95 to isolated electronic HOT lanes, said 95 Express Project Direct Debora M. Rivera.

“The remainder of the project costs are planned to be paid for through the toll revenues themselves,” she said.

She estimated construction costs for Phase 1A and 1B at \$104 million, with total costs rising to \$264 million if funding is found for the proposed Phase 2.

The Florida Department of Transportation hopes to complete the Request for Proposals package by Oct. 29, Ms. Rivera said, “after which we are scheduled to receive technical proposals by November 27 and price proposals by December 13. Notice to Proceed to the successful team is scheduled for Jan. 9, 2008”

Some construction will get underway shortly after, she said, with the managed lanes open to traffic as soon as construction schedules permit.

“With construction incentives,” Ms. Rivera said, “early opening of managed lanes in the northbound direction from I-395 to the Golden Glades – Phase 1A – will be as early as summer 2008. Early opening in the southbound direction – Phase 1 B – will be in the summer of 2009.

“The opening of Golden Glades north to I595 – Phase 2 – is currently estimated to be towards early spring of 2010; however, this schedule is subject to funds availability.”

Unlike HOV lanes, which are reserved for vehicles transporting two or more passengers, HOT lanes, dubbed Lexus Lanes by critics who call them elitist, allow single drivers with a SunPass to pay a higher toll that varies with the traffic flow to zip past fellow commuters.



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HOT lanes will preserve some of the HOV initiative by granting free passage to transit buses and preregistered carpools with three or more passengers, Ms. Rivera said.

Officials hope the application of the “managed lane” concept will more than double the capacity of the existing HOV facility.

“There is enough demand to ensure this capacity will be used,” Ms. Rivera said, “and the toll rates will be set so as to attract this demand in the new lanes while at the same time ensuring the average operating speed goal of 50mph is met.

“It’s important to note that because the managed lanes will be operated so as to optimize traffic flow, each of these lanes is expected to carry 1,600 vehicles per hour, whereas during the peak periods a general purpose lane or even an HOV lane that is not operating at optimum conditions typically carries under 1,000 vehicles per hour.”

She said passengers in general purpose lanes can expect some congestion relief once the new HOT lanes are in operation.

“In addition to the increase in vehicle throughput,” Ms. Rivera said, “the federal grant included approximately \$19 million to improve transit services in both Miami-Dade and Broward counties.

“These improvements should not only improve the level of service for existing transit users, but should also encourage increased transit use, translating into fewer trips on the roadway.

“Whenever congestion is relieved, environmental benefits accrue. These benefits include improved air quality, reduced energy consumption and reduced CO2 emissions. But perhaps one of the single most gains is that these benefits can be achieved without the impact to the social and natural environment that would normally occur with traditional widening projects.